

Rush Memorial Hospital

Renewed Patient Focus, Community Outreach

By Tom Schuman

One of the key institutions in a small community is typically the local hospital. It's a place where residents turn for their health care needs and more.

Rush Memorial Hospital in Rushville is enhancing its health care offerings and becoming a true community partner by expanding the "and more" expectations. Chief Executive Officer Brad Smith, with the help of a talented staff, is leading the way in this effort.

Smith, a Muncie native, has an extensive health care background. He has been at Rush Memorial for six years, the first five as chief financial officer. As CEO, he has focused on internal improvements, as well as an outreach to the community.

"A lot of change has happened in this past year," Smith states. "We've really tried to get involved in the community, and we encourage staff to be involved. That really helps the community see the hospital in a different light."

Smith has become active in the Rush County Economic & Community Development Corporation. The hospital is hosting three monthly roundtables – industrial, agriculture and information technology – providing the meeting space and lunch for participants. The goal is to generate discussion on economic development issues, with the hospital and community both striving for the same results.

"Our future depends on the economy growing. That's why I'm involved in economic development," Smith explains. "We understand we cannot be everything to everybody, but we're at about 35% market share now, and we want to increase that."

Rush Memorial is generally considered a primary care facility. It is competitive, however, in many areas with larger hospitals. Part of the mission is to educate local residents about the offerings.

Smith recently started the Rush Memorial Hospital Foundation. Prospective board members were given a tour of the hospital and most were "in awe of everything they saw." An impressive virtual tour of a new three-story medical office building with a new oncology center has energized fund-raising efforts. Smith expects the facility will open for business in 2006.

"In general, people don't think we have everything the big guys do," he contends. "Our technology is the latest and greatest right now, and our board of directors is open-minded to change. I've said from Day 1 that the community needs us, and we need the community. If we can get the community in the hospital for whatever reason, they can see what Rush Memorial has to offer."



Expansion plans are in place for Rush Memorial Hospital.



Training home

People are coming to the hospital for education and workforce development needs. Rush Memorial teamed with the city, local chamber of commerce and RushShelby Energy on a lifelong learning facility that is quickly gaining in popularity.

The hospital uses the space – complete with computers and the latest technology – for internal orientation and training needs. It was quickly realized, however, that the room would not be in use at all times.

Purdue is conducting organizational leadership courses. Ivy Tech math classes, as well as Microsoft Word and Excel instruction, are taking place. College Cooperative Southeast, which works with colleges and universities across the state, is coordinating the efforts, leading Smith to proclaim, “This is just scratching the surface (of what will be offered).”

Across the hallway from the training room is a WorkOne Express Center, which provides workforce development services for citizens who have a desire to work, learn or receive training. The community had been trying for an extended period of time to obtain an express center. It took Mayor Bob Bridges and Smith to corral local and state resources to make this partnership happen.

“We have a hard time filling some of our (open) spots,” notes Smith, reasoning that other employers face similar challenges. “It all goes back to education first, training and retraining.”

Partner efforts

The outreach to the community doesn't stop there. Smith and his staff are doing all they can to work closely with both businesses and individual customers. Examples include:

- Working with the city (as well as some individual companies) on its health care plan, looking at ways to reduce costs
- Growing its occupational health program to assist area employers with their workforce needs
- Allowing individuals to make reasonable progress toward satisfying their hospital debt, to the point of printing out coupon books for patient payments
- Donating time and money to a wide variety of community events and programs

A number of Rush Memorial employees are taking part in one of the Purdue leadership courses. The changes, Smith says, have boosted employee morale to an extremely high level with all working toward “seeing the hospital and the community succeed.”

Making changes

Smith and his staff realize it's a team effort. Rush Memorial



The sleep lab is a partnership between the Rush County and Hancock County hospitals.



Brad Smith wants to ensure that local residents know what the hospital has to offer.

and Hancock Regional Hospital have partnered on a sleep disorder lab that has benefited both facilities and patients throughout the area.

Rush Memorial is also proud of a recent award for having a smoke-free campus. Smith says the cafeteria refutes the typical “hospital food” claim and that community residents sometimes actually come to the hospital for lunch. Like many areas within the facility, renovation is taking place to better meet patient and community needs.

The changes even reach down to the words and images that are portrayed. One of the first acts was to alter the hospital logo to emphasize patient care. And the slogan – Committed to You, Close to Home – emerged after the video for the new building was developed.

“The old logo didn't say anything about patient care. If we put the patient first, everything else will fall into line. We wanted to demonstrate that everything is about the patient,” Smith professes.

Leading the way

The medical office building/oncology center referred to earlier is a major undertaking. RMH Healthcare Associates is already offering the community additional health care choices – ones that will only be expanded with the new facility.

Rush County has one of the highest cancer rates in the state. Current space limitations allow for limited privacy and personal care. The oncology center will feature private treatment rooms, family-only areas, lounges, in-room entertainment systems and more.

Smith terms it a “different approach” to oncology care. In addition, a conference center that will hold more than 100 people will be available as a multi-purpose facility for the community.

“Our goal is to be the leader, not the follower,” Smith proclaims. “A lot of people think small communities are five, six years behind. I want others to look back at Rush Memorial Hospital, see what we're doing and follow suit. We're slowly but surely turning the curve.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Brad Smith, Rush Memorial Hospital, at (765) 932-7513 or www.rushmemorial.com